

National consultation with civil society, Pančevo, Serbia, March 28th 2009.

*I think that it would be very interesting to hear public hearings of perpetrators, too, of course if they agree to that.*

**Statement:** Branislav Ramjanc, Civic Action Pančevo, Serbia, National consultations with civil society, Pančevo, Serbia, March 28th 2009.

*There are many of those who took part in the bloody events in the former Yugoslavia simply because they were forced to. Those are primarily younger people who were uniformed members of the unfortunate Yugoslav Peoples Army (JNA) and who were simply shipped to harshest war zones. They are, in fact, the first echelon soldiers asking to be recognized as participants but also as victims of war.*

**Statement:** Gojko Mišković, Open Lycée, Serbia, National consultations with civil society, Pančevo, Serbia, March 28th 2009.

**RECOM members should be individuals who enjoy the respect of every community in the region. During the consultations process it is necessary to collect nominations for RECOM commissaries and create a list of potential commissaries.**

*It is important that the selection of the members of the commission are people known for their long-time engagement in dealing with the past, people who contributed with their own efforts to make a contribution in their own micro-space.*

**Statement:** Snežana Baralić-Bošnjak, Women's Peace Group, National consultation with civil society, Pančevo, Serbia, March 28th 2009.

*These [individuals] should be the best of us, people sensitive to the suffering of others, responsible, honest, and those willing to deal with these unpleasant and difficult issues.*

**Statement:** Gordana Perunović-Fijat, Kikinda Club, Serbia, National consultation with civil society, Pančevo, Serbia, March 28th 2009.

**RECOM should name war crime perpetrators.**

*I think that war crimes perpetrators should be named and the rest should be left to state institutions and judiciaries to take action or not.*

**Statement:** Gordana Perunović-Fijat, Kikinda Club, Serbia, National consultation with civil society, Pančevo, Serbia, March 28th 2009.

**Before it begins its work, RECOM must define what a victim is. The definition should clearly**

**and precisely define who can be considered a victim.**

*I can hear that we are talking about victims here, but I don't see any preset criteria determining who can be considered a victim. We know that civilians are for sure victims, but we need some criteria determining it more clearly.*

**Statement:** David Montijas, president of the Jewish Municipality in Pančevo, Serbia, National consultation with civil society, Pančevo, Serbia, March 28th 2009.

**RECOM should also make public positive experiences of solidarity and friendship among members of different communities during armed conflicts.**

*In Jewish culture we pay a lot of attention to such examples because it helps the healing process, stories about somebody helping somebody. There are many examples like that and it is important that the example of Vojvodina is made public because there are 200,000 deserters who risked their lives to help others and it is important to see who they helped.*

**Statement:** Janja Beč Neumann, a sociologist and a writer from Serbia, National consultation with civil society, Pančevo, Serbia, March 28th 2009.

*The idea is to hear the positive stories through RECOM because whenever we talk about the conflict on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, we keep forgetting a large number of people who were able to demonstrate their humanity and who remained honourable in difficult situations.*

**Statement:** Andrej Nosov, Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia, National consultation with civil society, Pančevo, Serbia, March 28th 2009.

## **25. Local consultation with associations of victims on the Initiative for RECOM**

Bijeljina, BiH,  
April 11th 2009

The first national consultation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was organized by the non-governmental organization Povratak i održivi opstanak Association (BiH) and was attended by 26 representatives of non-governmental organizations, mostly victims of war associations, and other associations of citizens. Three of the present people were journalists, at the same time members

of non-governmental organizations. President of the Islamic community in Bijeljina took part in the consultations, too. Consultations were monitored by an observer from the Bijeljina office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission. Consultations were opened by Vehid Šehić (Citizens' Forum of Tuzla, BiH), Salem Čorbo, (Povratak i održivi opstanak Association, BiH), Bogdan Ivanišević (International Center for Transitional Justice) and Nataša Kandić (Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia). Dnevni Avaz, EuroBlic, RTRS, and RTV BN announced the news on the consultation.

**Participants support the establishment of RECOM and they stress the importance of securing its regional character.**

*As someone whose terms of reference are building tolerance in the region, I'm thinking about this idea [establishing RECOM] as the only way to achieve that. It is especially important because at the national level and here in Serbia and also even in Croatia and other countries not very much has been done in terms of the process of building tolerance, particularly in terms of the process of coming to know the truth.*

**Statement:** Radmila Žigić, Pan Radio, Serbia, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

*I entirely support the Coalition for RECOM. The most important issue is that those involved in the coalition are people that want to hear the real truth and they are not biased with respect to one side or another, in other words, that they are persons of authority.*

**Statement:** Admir Karić, Youth Group of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Republika Srpska, BiH, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

**RECOM should deal with all victims, regardless of their ethnic background. It is necessary to create an individualized listing of all victims and all perpetrators, containing their first and last names.**

*There is no truth without respect and equality for all victims and on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

**Statement:** Smilja Mitrović, Association of families of missing fighters and civilians of Semberija and Majevica, BiH, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

*This Commission should examine the entire truth*

*regarding former Yugoslavia, including the crimes committed during the second world war and after. On behalf of all victims I support it because all victims would like to know that the perpetrator of the crime committed against them is named and punished.*

**Statement:** Blagoje Josipović, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Bijeljina municipality, BiH, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

*It is the initiative of RECOM to note every victim and make a list of all victims regardless of their nationality.*

**Statement:** Bogdan Ivanišević, International Center for Transitional Justice, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

*You are talking here about Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats, and I advocate the inclusion of another category no one mentioned - the victim. There are some of us who do not belong to any ethnic entities and we are not national minorities, we are something 'former' that nobody cares to mention. There is no fear that we'll work on national quotas, rather we're interested in victims, with names and surnames.*

**Statement:** Vehid Šehić, Citizens' Forum of Tuzla, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

**Local communities should reconstruct the events that took place among them, immediately before the beginning of the conflict. It is necessary to hold public hearings of citizens in order to name perpetrators of war crimes and describe in detail all crimes that took place on the territory of that community.**

*I am personally familiar with those who lived in Bijeljina, but I am not going to talk about what I saw. If somebody needs it, I will give my statement about what went on in Bijeljina. We're now talking about Bijeljina, not about other municipalities. It's possible to give testimonies here and those that want to do so, let them. They were passing through Bijeljina for three days and destroyed 134 Roma houses. Who did it? I know it wasn't me.*

**Statement:** Pašaga Beganović, Republika Srpska Roma Association, BiH, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

*A place called Lokanj, we are neighbours there, and we want the truth and I support the truth, there's nothing without it. But why did it have to take 17 years, since 1992? 68 people were killed in a most monstrous way. That's true, the process will happen. The truth will come so that future generation will be*

*good neighbours and so that we can say that is that; that group did it, that person ordered it.*

**Statement:** Fahrudin Hasanović, Association of 'šehids' and killed fighters, BiH, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

**A regional commission with a clearly defined mandate can help focus on the issue of victims, primarily the issue of the missing.**

*I hope that this commission will manage to discover the missing who will be given over to their families for a proper burial.*

**Statement:** Mato Ežegović, a returnee to Pelagićevo, BiH, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

*I see that there are many initiatives when it comes to the missing and I hope this one will do it in a specific way. Maybe this is an opportunity to put pressure on missing persons' institutions in BiH.*

**Statement:** Vehid Šehić, Citizens' Forum of Tuzla, BiH, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

*What I understand from this gathering today is that people need to talk about what has happened to them or to people they know and that shows us what they really need. And that is a relevant indicator of what is necessary. We need to create a public platform for the voice of the victims. Of course, that presupposes specific procedures for publicly presenting data or personal statements. But definitely the idea that RECOM should organise public hearings of victims is endorsed at all consultations. The idea is supported because it is very easy to stray from the topic and instead to talk about what crimes the commission should deal with.*

**Statement:** Nataša Kandić, Humanitarian Law Center, Serbia, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

**RECOM can assist the civil society sector, which is struggling with the issues of war crimes, violations of humanitarian law as well as the legal difficulties faced by victims' families.**

*I think that this initiative makes a lot of sense and I also think that public activity of non-governmental organizations dealing with this issue is less intensive. I'm afraid that citizens' associations and non-governmental organizations are slowly losing power. Time is passing, interest is dissipating. There are various objective and subjective reasons that lead to that. I think that this kind of gathering and*

*the creation of such a center [RECOM] that can coordinate the work. RECOM can achieve results and perhaps it is the last chance we have.*

**Statement:** Sead Zahirović, independent war crimes researcher, BiH, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

**The regional approach in establishing the facts about war crimes is more likely to be successful than a national (state) level activity.**

*Victims are forced, after being manipulated with for so long, to look at each other with disapproval and we have no choice but to try to find the truth together. That is what makes the Regional Commission so important.*

**Statement:** Jusuf Trbić, Bosniak Cultural Community Preporod, BiH, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

*A broader social community has a responsibility to respond to the horrible events of the past. I am afraid that we have not been able to do it so far. There are no significant results at the local, state, entity, or the regional level. The creation of this commission can be a way to reach that goal.*

**Statement:** Sead Zahirović, independent war crimes researcher, BiH, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

*We are all in a way wounded, we have our stories, and we all have a joint interest which is the creation of this regional commission because in my belief, only victims can find the truth because all the victims belong to one nation, the nation of the unfortunate. We are all witnesses of the disintegration of our former country and we have all seen the truth being butchered. Everybody took a piece afterwards, each newly formed state, each new party, each political elite and we have also seen that those who planned the crimes, who supported the crimes, understand each other pretty well today and they don't have the problems that we have today. We are ready to confront each other while telling our stories here and they certainly don't do it.*

**Statement:** Jusuf Trbić, Bosniak Cultural Community Preporod, BiH, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

**The inclusion of representatives of religious community in the debate is suggested.**

*Religious elites are part of our reality and they significantly influence the creation of our societies*

*but they can also help with the process of dealing with the past because of their enormous influence. That is why I think they should be included in the consultations process.*

**Statement:** Amir Kulagić from Srebrenica, BiH, Local consultation with associations of victims, Bijeljina, BiH, April 11th 2009.

## 26. National consultation with students on the Initiative for RECOM

Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo,  
April 15th 2009

The National Consultation with students on the initiative for RECOM was organized by the non-governmental youth organization Integra Association (Kosovo) and was attended by 40 students and three monitors, members of associations of victims' families. Four panellists, Kushtrim Koliqi (Integra Association, Kosovo), Shukrie Gashi (Partners Kosova, Kosovo), Bekim Blakaj (Humanitarian Law Center, Kosovo), and Ivan Novosel (Legalis, Croatia) gave their introductions as specified by the agenda. KosovaPress was the only media house that published an article on this event.

### Participants supported the initiative for RECOM and the regional approach to the entire process.

*We truly hope that this Coalition for RECOM will be successful and we hope it will be created soon and mobilize all its forces (...) I want one more time to ask you to approach the whole issue very seriously and I hope you will be lucky enough to go on with this Coalition.*

**Statement:** Besart Metaj, a student, Faculty of Law, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

*In my opinion there should be a deeper cooperation in the region and it should be designed as an inter-state cooperation because our main interest is to find war crimes perpetrators and bring them to justice.*

**Statement:** Ylber Maxhuni, Youth Step Association, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

*Up until this moment, ten years after the conflict, there were only two war crimes trials which were brought to an end with final decisions handed*

*down by international judges here, in Kosovo. The sentences were disappointingly low from the point of view of the victims' family members. And that is why such a commission is needed.*

**Statement:** Bekim Blakaj, Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

*There is one war crime perpetrator in common for all of us, and I am talking about the same people who committed crimes in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and here in Kosovo. That is why I believe it is necessary to cooperate because any help coming from any part of this region is very important.*

**Statement:** Edmir Sejdiu, a student, Faculty of political science, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

### It is necessary to establish the facts about all crimes committed in Kosovo and the process should begin with victims and their testimonies while the judiciary from Kosovo and Serbia should process war crimes perpetrators.

*There have been many crimes in Kosovo, various massacres and so on, but we need evidence for all that, it is necessary to find perpetrators of these crimes but not every time by balancing perpetrators with those who suffered the crimes. They cannot be put in the same category.*

**Statement:** Lavdim Rizani, a student, Faculty of political science, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

*Many perpetrators of more or less serious war crimes, murder, violence, and other kinds of crimes, are still at large living a normal life. They must be identified and they should be confronted with the facts. Victims are the facts against the perpetrators which is more or less the underlying concept of this commission. It is necessary to know what to do, to know names, to find evidence, to know all the events important for the commission, to know what happened.*

**Statement:** Kushtrim Koliqi, Integra Association, Kosovo, National consultation with students, Prishtinë/Priština, Kosovo, April 15th 2009.

*Our job is to establish facts and present them to the authorities, and it is up to Serbian society, the Serbian government and our government to identify groups which were active in the region and within these groups to identify those who committed war crimes.*